



U.S. Department of Justice

Brett L. Tolman

**United States Attorney
District of Utah**

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**CONTACT: MELODIE RYDALCH
801-325-3206
801-243-6475 (CELL)**

**JUAN BECERRA
FBI
801-579-1400
801-514-3672 (CELL)**

PRESS RELEASE
***GRAND JURY RETURNS INDICTMENT
CHARGING TWO WITH
DAMAGE AND INTERFERENCE
WITH ANIMAL ENTERPRISES***

SALT LAKE CITY – A federal grand jury returned an indictment Wednesday afternoon, unsealed today, charging two individuals with damaging and interfering with the operation of an animal enterprise in connection with an Aug. 19, 2008, attack at the McMullin mink farm in South Jordan. A second count charges them with an attempted attack Oct. 18, 2008, at the Mathews mink farm in Hyrum.

William James Viehl, age 22, of Layton and Alex Jason Hall, age 20, of Ogden were arrested today. They will be arraigned on the charges Friday at 9 a.m. before U.S. Magistrate Judge Brooke Wells. Defendants charged in indictments are presumed innocent unless or until proven guilty in court.

Contributing to the ongoing investigation of the case are the FBI and its JTTF, South Jordan, Kaysville and Farmington police departments, and the Cache County Sheriff's Office.

"While we recognize and respect the strongly held beliefs of those who advocate for animal rights, when their actions cross over the line into criminal conduct, we are going to take aggressive action," U.S. Attorney Brett L. Tolman said today. "Regardless of your opinion, the fur industry is lawful and provides income for many Utah families. The law protects them; plain and simple. We all rely on the rule of law to protect us, our opinions, and our lawful ventures. Criminal acts targeting businesses in the dark of night are not going to be tolerated in our communities," Tolman said.

"The FBI applauds the United States Attorney's Office for securing the indictment of these two individuals. At the outset of this investigation, the FBI and the JTTF, working with its local law enforcement partners including the South Jordan Police Department, committed to finding the individuals responsible for the damages caused to the McMullin Mink Farm. And once the FBI was made aware of the attempt to damage the Matthews Mink Farm, that same pledge was made," Timothy J. Fuhrman, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Salt Lake Field Office said today.

"Today's indictments are reflective of good old fashioned police work and are evidence of the commitment by the FBI to investigate these incidents. The FBI supports individuals' rights to exercise First Amendment privileges; however, once that activity crosses the line into criminal conduct, there will be a thorough and aggressive investigation of such incidents," Fuhrman said.

The first count of the indictment, a felony, alleges Viehl and Hall used a facility of interstate commerce, such as a phone, for the purpose of damaging and interfering with the operations of the McMullin mink farm, an animal enterprise, and intentionally damaged and caused the loss of real and personal property at the business. The indictment alleges damage and losses exceeded \$10,000. The potential penalty for this count is up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The second count of the indictment, a misdemeanor, charges the two with attempting to damage and interfere with the operations of the Mathews

mink farm in Hyrum. The misdemeanor count carries a potential penalty of up to one year in prison and a \$100,000 fine.

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